SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS SERIES

G 684

The Short Story In India: Some Aspects

Edited by

M. G. GOPALAKRISHNAN

Faculty of English and Foreign Languages
Gandhigram Rural Institute □ Gandhigram

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Introductory Remarks

by

Dr. ARAM,
Vice-Chancellor

I am happy that the Faculty of English and Foreign Languages has organised a one-day Seminar on 'The Short-story in Indian Literature'.

Literature is a very potent force in any society. Creative writers cannot keep aloof from what is happening around them. They hold the mirror to social realities and draw our attention to the need for stamping out the social evils staring us in the face. They should not confine themselves to their state or country, but should go beyond the regional and national barriers and adopt a global outlook. The short story, like any other literary form, should reflect social realities.

The present seminar, I hope, will examine this aspect as well as other aspects of the short story. It gives me great pleasure to welcome the distinguished professors whc are present here to guide the deliberations of the seminar—Dr. V. Satchidandan, Dr. K. S. Ramamurthi, Dr. Balarama Gupta and Dr. C. J. Roy.

(From the inaugural address delivered by Dr. M. Aram)

FOREWORD

The short story as a literary *genre* came of age towards the end of the nineteenth century. That it is a distinct form of literature, however, is ignored or treated lightly by a good many historians of literature, especially in Great Britain where its development into a full-fledged literary form was very tardy. Shortstory writing came naturally to the Russian writers, while the American writers took to it seriously and methodically. The Indian short story is the outcome chiefly of the influence of the European and American short story, especially the Russian form. It is doubtful whether any systematic study of the short story in Indian literature has been made. It is a felt need. therefore, to make a deep and unbiased study of this literary form in our country.

It was this fact that prompted the Faculty of English and Foreign Languages in the Gandhigram Rural Institute to organise a one-day seminar on "The Short Story in Indian Literature" on 5th April 1981. This volume is a collection of some of the papers read at the seminar. It cannot and does not lay claim to be a comprehensive study. It is rather a study of just a few of the aspects of the short story in Indian Literature.

The Faculty is deeply indebted to all who participated in the seminar and presented papers, especially, Dr. V. Satchidanandan, Dr. K. S. Ramamurthi, Dr. G. S. Balarama Gupta and Dr. C. J. Roy. We owe a special word of gratitude to our Vice-Chancellor, Dr. M. Aram, but for whose help and guidance this seminar would not have been possible.

M. G. GOPALAKRISHNAN

A BRIEF REPORT OF THE SEMINAR

The Faculty of English and Foreign Languages of the Gandhigram Rural Institute held a one-day seminar on *The Short Story in Indian Literature* on 5th April 1981. Dr M. Aram, the Vice-Chancellor of the Gandhigram Rural Institute, inaugurated the seminar. In his inaugural address he pinpointed the attention of the audience on the social problems staring us in the face and stressed the responsibility of creative writers in this context. Such writers should go beyond the regional and national barriers and adopt a global outlook. The Short Story in particular is a competent medium through which the attention of the people can be drawn to these problems.

The morning session of the seminar was presided over by Dr. V. Sachithanandan, Co-ordinator of the Department of English and Comparative Literature, Madurai-Kamaraj University. In his presidential address he outlined the development of the short story as a literary genre. Prof. M. G. Gopalakrishnan in his paper on "The Short Story as a Genre" brought out the essential difference between the novel and the short story as distinctive literary forms, the lyrical sweetness of the short story, the unity of motive, of purpose, of action and of impression which is its most essential element. Though plot is important, he said, the success of a short story is to be judged by its effect, the impression of the mood or emotion or situation it conveys to the reader. He also cited examples from the short stories of James Joyce and Katherine Masefied, to show the influence of the Russian short - story writer, Chekhov which has has resulted in plot being relegated to a secondary importance by the situation and atmosphere in the stories. Next Moulavi Rahamadullah Bakkavi traced the growth and development of the short story in Urdu. Dr. K. S. Ramamurthi of the Autonomous P. G. Centre, Trichy, in his paper surveyed the various aspects of South

Indian short stories written in English. He made special mention of the subtle humour employed by R. K. Narayan to reveal the Indian mentality.

The afternoon session was presided over by Dr. M. Aram. Dr. G. S. Balarama Gupta, Head of the Department of English, Annamalai University presented a paper on "Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Steel Hawk* and Other Stories. an Evaluation". In his paper he stressed Bhattacharya's deep and abiding commitment to human values and his frank and consistent espousal of the doctrine. literature for life's sake. All that he wanted to establish was that Bhattacharya's claim to recognition in the Indian writing in English rested on his novels and not on his short stories. To substantiate his statement Dr. Gupta made a thorough study of Bhattacharya's collection of short stories *Steel Hawk*. He further said that the traits that mark a top-ranking short - story writer are rare in Bhattacharya. Next Sri M. S. Prabakaran of the Gandhigram Rural Institute presented a paper on "Stream of Consciousness in Puthumaipithan's Short Stories." In his paper he critically analysed a few stories of Puthumaipithan who adopted the stream of consciousness technique. The paper raised several questions from the audience. Dr. V. Sachithanandam did not think that Puthumaipithan followed this technique. Dr K.S. Ramamurthi was of the view that it is the critics who found Puthumai pithan adopting the technique. Sri. P.V. Rudra Wariar of the Malayalam Department of the Gandhigram Rural Institute in his paper on "The short story in Malayalam" traced the reasons for the speedy growth of the genre in Malayalam. He divided the evolution of the genre into three periods. namely, the early period, the golden period, and the most modern period.

Dr. C.J. Roy, Professor of Malayalam. Madurai-Kamaraj University, presented a paper on the short story in Malayalam. He critically surveyed the *genre* in Malayalam literature. He said that short story writers like Thakazhi and Kesavadev made use of the genre as a weapon to expose the social

evils. Then Sri. R. Jothiprakash of the Gandhigram Rural Institute in his paper on 'Tagore as a Short-Story writer' explained Tagore's robust realism and closeness to actual life, side by side with a highly poetic and imaginative recreation of what is observed. He also said that we could find in them tenderness, pathos, patriotism and humanity and philosophical vision. Sri. M. Veluchamy of the Tamil department of the Gandhigram Rural Institute traced the origin and development of short story as a genre in Tamil. He said that the development of this genre was due to the growth and spread of periodicals in Tamil which projected the genre in multidimensions. He also remarked that the short stories written with rural background on rural problems are proportionately few when compared to the quantitative increase of short stories in Tamil. Dr. N. Radhakrishnan of the Gandhigram Rural institute presented a paper on "Indian Ethos as reflected in the Indian Short Story". He defined Indian Literature as the vast spectrum of writings in the regional literatures and English by Indian writers. He traced the influence of Gandhi, Freud, Marx Anand, Premchand and Kishan Chander, M. Varadarajan, Bhave, Bharati, K. A. Abbas, Jeyakanthan. He also pointed out that a pervasive sense of alienation dominates modern fiction. He was of the opinion that many Indian writers work within the Indian-tradition whether their medium is English, Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi or Kannada. Then Prof. Sankaranarayanan of Palani Andavar Arts College spoke on child psychology as revealed in Anand and Narayan, The Tamil paper of Sri. Jeyanthan, a well-known short-story writer in Tamil, on "The short story in Tamil-today" was taken as read. In his paper he classified the present-day short story writers into five. They are:

i) Those writers who enjoy the fruits of labour and who want the existing society not to disintegrate,

ii) those writers who are discontented and go back to live in an ancient society,

iii) those writers who are discontented and have lost faith in the ancient values and want to build a new society,

iv) those writers who identify themselves in both these groups,

v) those writers who do not commit themselves to any ideology,

He stressed that literature should be created for a purpose. There is nothing wrong, according to him, if a piece of literary work is utilised for propagation. He brought out the prevailing conflict between tradition and modernism. The present-day writers, according to him, are passing through the transitional period.

In his closing remarks Dr. M. Aram said, while replying to Dr. V. Sachithanandan that he would see that the Department of English of the Gandhigram Rural Institute included the elements of Comparative literature syllabus while framing the syllabus. The one-day seminar came to a close with a vote of thanks moved by Prof, M. G. Gopalakrishnan.

THE SHORT STORY AS A LITERARY GENRE

M. G. GOPALAKRISHNAN

The short story is at once as old as man and as modern as journalism. Stories of some sort or other have been told ever since man became articulate. Cleverly told, they have always gripped the interest of young and old alike. The earliest stories were oral recitations, transmitted from generation to generation. Most of them must have gone into oblivion since writing was unknown in that remote past. Those that have been handed down by word of mouth and recorded in later centuries are either long romances and legends of chivalry and gallantry, bristling with magic, myth and wild farce, providing a sort of escapist entertainment, or fables and parables for moral and religious teaching. We find quite a number of them in such collections as the *Jatakas* the *Panchatantra*, the *Hitopadesa*, the *Ges'a Romanorum* the *Fabliaux*, the epic *Chansons de geste*, *Aesop's Fables*, and the French and German *Lays*. These stories are good in their way. They are, no doubt, short and serve their purpose—that of providing harmless enjoyment or bringing home morals to their listeners. But what we now call a short story is essentially different from them. It is the outcome of an evolution that extended over centuries and attained position and recognition as a distinctive literary form only by the middle of the nineteenth century.

In what ways is it different from the antique story? In the first place, the modern short story, like any other form of literature, is essentially concerned with people in their ordinary life, with their speech and behaviour, with their thoughts, feelings and sensations. It is a literary form in its own right, and not just a vehicle for overt and conscious moral or religous teaching, or for political and social reform. Nor is the modern short story meant just to give enjoyment in which the mind of the reader plays little or no part. Like other literary forms it relaxes the reader by exercising or bringing into play faculties of the mind that would otherwise lie

dormant. Further, the short story (as we mean it today) is not a rambling, loosely knit piece of work; it is an organic whole, producing 'a unique or single effect'.

How is the short story to be defined? To say that it is 'a story that is short' would be dilettantish. It must certainly be *short* to merit its recognized name, but any story that is short cannot claim the name merely by virtue of this quality. Equally wrong would it be to call it 'a short novel' for in spite of certain elements common to both these literary forms (such as plot, characters and setting) there is a clear difference between them in the treatment of material, in focus and in angle. The short story cannot afford the vast canvas on which the novel exhibits life in its variety and complexity. Nor can it deal with the evolution of character in such amplitude as the novel can, for in a short story we see men and women just for a few minutes and in a few relationships and circumstances only. Not that the *shortness* of the short story is a handicap; it is, on the contrary, a strength. It requires of the writer far greater care and precision in the treatment of the theme than the vast canvas of the novel does. This, in turn, enables the writer within the short span at his disposal to bring into such sharp focus the main situation as well as the humanness or individuality of each character as will leave on the reader the impression of having participated in the life and movement depicted in the story. A sudden flash can reveal features hitherto unnoticed in a situation: a brief but minute glance at a person can bring out his individuality much more sharply than a long and full exploration of his character can. Its shortness often gives the short story the sweetness of a lyric. A.E. Coppard tells us that some of Hardy's stories struck him 'with the same startling enchantment as Keats's poem *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*. There is as much difference between the novel and the short story as there is between the epic and the lyric'.

And so the modern short story cannot be called either 'a story that is short' or 'a short novel'. As early as 1842, Edgar Allan Poe, the American writer, one of the earliest to write short stories in the modern sense, defined it as a prose narrative requiring from half an hour to one or two hours in its perusal and limited to 'a certain unique or single effect', to which every

detail is subordinate. Almost the same thing is implied in the following words of H.G.Wells:

> A short story is, or should be, a simple thing; it aims at producing one single vivid effect; it has to seize the attention at the outset, and never relaxing, gather it together more and more until the climax is reached. The limits of the human capacity to attend closely therefore set a limit to it; it must explode and finish before interruption occurs or fatigue sets in.

Both these definitions emphasize the most essential element of the short story—*unity*: unity of motve, of purpose, of action, and of impression. There must be one and only one informing idea, which must be worked out to its logical conclusion with unerring singleness of aim and directness of method. While in the novel different elements are woven into its texture, and at times there may be two or many points of interest, no such scattering of interest can be permitted in the short story. The interest arising from the germinal idea of the story must not be complicated by any other consideration.

This precludes any personal interpretation by the writer in the description of the situation or in the portrayal of characters from the scope of the short story. Any asides or comments from the writer are most likely to mar the singleness and vividness of effect so indispensable for the story and distract the attention of the reader. Moralizing is equally outside the domain of the short-story writer. Whatever moral there is in a short story will be implicit, without being intentionally woven in. The writer depicits a character or characters in a particular situation as he sees them, not as he wishes them to be seen. It is for us, the readers, to draw (that is, if we are bent on it) any moral from what is presented before us. No writer of short stories will be worth the name if he has taken to this literary form for overt moralizing. He cannot afford to moralize; his is to bring out the truth of life by presenting his characters in a typical human scene. Behind that truth lies a meaning that is essentially religious, that is concerned with the eternal conflict between *good* and *bad*, nay, that often lies beyond the ideas of right and

wrong accepted at one particular time or place. But it would certainly not look proper for the writer, every now and then, to peep out and address the readers on the moral significance of the situation he is presenting before us. Reflections on *good* and *evil* are, no doubt, elevating, but they had better remain in the domain of preachers of philosophers where they belong. Besides, the moral significance of the story will be all the more powerfully felt for not being made explicit or cast in the form of a running commentary.

The range of the short story is unlimited so far as its theme or germinal idea is concerned. The vision of a short-story writer is almost the same as that of a poet. He can give "a local habitation and a name" even to fleeting moments, even to what appears drab and humdrum to ordinary people. In the words of Elizabeth Bowen,

> The short storyist shares — or should share to an extent — the faculties of the poet: he can render the significance of the small event. He can take for the theme of his story a face glimpsed in the street, an unexplained incident, a snatch of talk overheard on bus or train.[1]

Or he can deal with a dramatic incident or situation, an arresting scene, a series of events all leading to a memorable head, a character and his peculiarities, a bit of experience, an aspect of life, or one of countless other themes. And he can make his rendering of it as enchanting and as poetical as a lyric. But whatever his theme, he should, in the presentation of his characters, never lose sight of the fact that truth alone — the truth of life in the raw — should matter to him. He should closely observe people as individuals as well as social beings and their life and see the inner core of reality in the intricate web of the circumstances of existence. The gift of creative vision then will enable him to portray men and women with sympathy and understanding and thus to bring out the truth of life.

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1. Elizabeth Bowen in an article in the 1945 May number of *Britain To-day*

It has already been said in this paper that the component parts of the short story such as theme, plot, characters and setting are practically the same as those of the novel and that the difference between these literary forms consists in the treatment of the material in focus and in angle. These elements are interdependent, but the degree of importance of each over the others varies from author to author. A strong plot had for long been (and is even now by a good many writers) regarded as the *sine qua non* of the short story. Most of the early masters of this new literary from move their narratives forward smoothly with controlled plots to a memorable head. Their narratives invariably follow a chronological pattern: almost every story is a chain of events, generally presented from an omniscient point of view, suggesting that the narrator is in complete control. There are among them a great many that are constructed with great technical skill, and have characters portrayed with deep sympathy and understanding. The stories of Maupassant, for example, move swiftly in clear, smooth plots, with the right details filled in with almost photographic precision. His story, *The Necklace*, is the straight-forward narration of a girl who borrows a necklace of imitation diamonds believing it to be real. Having lost it, she goes to desperate lengths to obtain enough money to buy a necklace of real diamonds and hands it over to the owner. This is followed by years of hard, unremitting labour to make up for the loss of the huge amount of money she has had to spend to save her face. Finally (in the last line of the story) she learns that the diamonds were really worthless imitations. In Thomas Hardy's story *The Son's Veto*, we have a series of scenes covering a number of years. Sophy, a charming and kindly country girl, serving in the house of an elderly rector, rejects the proposal of Sam, a young gardener, whom she likes but does not love. In due course the rector's wife dies, and Sophy stays on to help him to run his home. Circumstances compel her to marry the rector and become the lady of the house in which she was a servant. The marriage is in its own quiet way happy, although the rector is fully aware that by marrying Sophy he has 'committed social suicide'. In due course he dies, leaving a son. The boy grows

up to be a class-conscious snob. He too becomes a priest, but he is ashamed of his mother and her low birth and lack of education. This saddens Sophy and makes her an invalid. In the meantime Sam, her admirer of early years, has become a modestly successful market gardener. He meets her again and proposes to her. She would have been happy with Sam, but her son regards the whole affair as a horrifying disgrace. He bullies her into a solemn vow that she will never marry Sam. Her health steadily deteriorates, and in the final scene we see Sam waiting sadly at the roadside to watch her hearse go by,'— While from the mourning coach a young smooth-shaven priest in a high waist-coat looked black as a cloud at the shopkeeper standing there'. In this story, there is perfect fusion of atmosphere and characters within the plot, and the narration is straight-forward. We find more or less same features, *viz.* strong plot and straight-forward narration, in the short stories of such other writers as Poe, O, Henry and Somerset Maugham.

In sharp contrast are stories in which the plot is secondary to situation and atmosphere. This trend in short-story writing began with the Russian writers of the second half of the nineteenth century and gathered force in the first quarter of the twentieth century. It was Turgenev who first wrote stories of this type. In the words of Henry James, Turgenev's method of writing stories

> was never an affair of plot . . . that was the last thing he thought of : it was the representation of certain persons . . . whom he wished to see in action, being sure that such people must do something very special and interesting. [2]

In other words, action and effects shape themselves from the starting point of the character or characters who find themselves in a particular situation. Turgenev's method of short-story writing was followed by a number of other writers. But it is with Chekhov more than with any other writer that we associate what is generally called the 'plotless' story, evidently because he perfected the method.

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2. Henry James, *Partial Portraits*

The essential difference between the earlier type of stories and the Chekhovian story is not merely that plot is unimportant in the latter. The earlier stories move on in a *linear* direction to a strong climax or a well-defined point, whereas the Chekhovian story develops through impressionistic details in a *radial* manner and does not seem to end.

> A typical story by Chekhov is the life-story of a " mood ", of state of mind, usually of the relation of one person to another, and the gradual transformation of that state of mind under the action of the incessant infinitesimal and unforseen pinpricks of life. Sensitiveness to these pinpricks is the main feature of Chekhov's people------ 3

The characters are usually ordinary people in isolation, loneliness, or frustration. There is very little action or plot, which has given rise to the comment that nothing happens in the story. A great deal is really happening. The lyrical evocation of mood and atmosphere tells us a lot more than what is apparent on the surface of the situation, and the open-ended, circular movement of the story, however slight the event depicted may be, conveys to us the impression of a much larger world of events of which the story forms a small segment. We are made to feel that the lives of the characters go on, and that the events in the story will be repeated, — the same thing that Dmitry Dmitrick Gurow and Anna Sergeevna feel at the end of the story, *The Lady with a Dog:*

> . . . and it was clear to them both that the end was still far far away and that the most complex and difficult part was only just beginning.

The theme of the story *Grief,* for example, is the sad mood of Iona, a cab - driver, who is laden with grief at the death of his son and wants to unburden his heavy heart to someone: 'To whom Shall I Tell My Grief ?' The mood of the poor forlorn man is set against a background of twilight, overcast with thick snow.

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3 *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* Vol. 5

A thick wet snow is slowly twirling around the newly lighted street lamps and lying on soft thin layers on the roofs, the horses' backs, people's shoulders and hats. The cab-driver, Iona Potapov, is quite white, and looks like a phantom; he is bent double as far as a human body can bend double; he is seated on his box, and never makes a move. If a whole snowdrift fell on him, it seems as if he would not find it necessary to shake it off. His little horse is also quite white and remains motionless; its immobility, its angularity, and its straight wooden-looking legs, even close by give it the appearance of a ginger-bread horse worth a kopeck. It is, no doubt, plunged in deep thought. If you were snatched from the plough, from your usual grey surroundings, and were thrown into this slough full of monstrous lights, unceasing noise and hurrying people, you too would find it difficult not to think.

The atmosphere thus is dreary and has a ghastly white colour perfectly matching the mood of the protagonist of the story. The sentence quoted last gives a hint that Iona and his horse find themselves lonely and forlorn in the midst of the unfeeling civilised crowd in the city. Now and fhen Iona takes someone or other in his sleigh for a pittance, and every time he is engaged he makes a desperate attempt at speaking about his son's death to the passenger. But none, not even his fellow cab-drivers, lend an attentive ear to him. They are indifferent to his grief or cynical about it. Finally seeing that 'it is useless bo turn to people for help', he gets the heavy load off his chest by pouring out his tale of grief to his horse:

'Are you tucking in?' Iona asks his horse, looks at his bright eyes; 'go on, tuck in; though we've not earned our corn, we can eat hay. Yes, I'm too old to drive - my son could have, not I. He was a first-rate cab-driver, If only he had lived!'

Iona is silent for a moment, then continues: 'That's how it is, my old horse. There's no more Kuzma Ionitch. He has

left us to live, and he went off pop. Now let's say, you had a foal, you were that foal's mother, and suddenly, let's say, that foal went and left you to live after him. It would be sad wouldn't it?'

The little horse munches, listens, and breathes over his master's hand...

Iona's feelings are too much for him and he tells the little horse the whole story.

We cannot say that the pattern of all Chekhov's stories is the same. Some of his best-known stories such as *The Bishop* and *The Chorus Girl* are accomplished in a single scene. Flashbacks are often (not in all stories) used to cover other points of time. A number of his stories, especially the most famous of them, *The Lady with a Dog*, are a chain of incidents. But even in them the plot is much less important than the 'moods' of the characters and the sense impressions, and 'it is simply the integral unity of thought and feeling that provides the form and moves towards the climax'.[4]

The Chekhovian type of story has influenced a great many short-story writers such as James Joyce, Katherine Mansfield and A.E. Coppard. As a matter of fact, it is from the stories of Chekhov and these writers rather than from the 'plotted' stories of writers like Poe, R. L. Stevenson, Thomas Hardy and Somerset Maugham (however great they are) that the modern short story has got its genuine character. James Joyce is the counterpart of Chekhov in English—perhaps much more than any other English writer. In his short stories we find 'the Chekhovian passion to see the truth, the Chekhovian instinct to reveal it by dwelling briefly but with penetrating clarity on individual human beings, one or two in each story'. 'Counterparts' in *Dubliners*, his book of short stories, is a good example of his art. It deals with one afternoon and evening in the life of Farrington, a burly strong man, angry and confined in a clerical job at which he is lazy and inefficient. Rebuked at his work, he goes out and getting drunk enters into a trial of strength with another strong fellow in a public house. He loses and goes

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4 T. O. Beachcroft, *The Modest Art*.

home in a terribly angry mood to find his house dark and cold, and the fire out. Then he gives vent to all his rage and misery by savagely beating his small son. The story is told very simply, with no emotive touches. The descriptions are few but sure. But the situations are created with such deep human insight that the scene leaves an indelible impression on us and makes us feel for the wretched Farrington in his blind and stupid rage as well as for the terrified child.

Katherine Mansfield is another great English short-story writer who came under the influence of Chekhov.

> It seemed that any significant fragment of life was enough for her. She observed it minutely, described it simply and objectively, and at the end the point had been made without apparent effort, leaving the reader thrilled, disturbed or emotionally enlightened.[5]

The very essence of her art is the sheer intensity of her vision – a vision of people framed in their lives. She has the supreme ability to portray them and their feelings with humanity and compassion, yet with a detachment that is Chekhov-like. All the information, the narrative flow, is contained in the words spoken by the characters and the scene as it appears in their eyes. What wealth of information is conveyed, for example, by the incoherent words stammered by the young girl in *The Garden Party* to her brother; after a painful visit of sympathy to the home of a poor family in which a violent death has taken place on the day of her parents' garden party she has just returned; and then follows this conversation between her and her brother:

> 'Was it awful?' he asks her. 'No,'sobbed Laura. 'It was simply marvellous. But Laurie...' She stopped and looked at her brother. 'Isn't life,'she stammered. Isn't life...'
> But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood. '*Isn't* it, darling?' said Laurie.

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5 R. A. Scoft-James, *Fifty Years of English Literature: 1900-1950*

The five words uttered by our Else at the end of *The Doll's House* 'I seen the little lamp', express a lot more than a description of her feelings can. Katherine Mansfield is at her best when she portrays people who are lonely or misunderstood or social misfits women like Ma Parker in the story of that name, men like William in *Marriage a la Mode*, social outcasts like the Kelvey children in *The Doll's House*. She has a marvellous power of describing scenes and settings in the fewest possible words, and a great many of these descriptions reveal her creative, poetic mind. Here, for example, is the scene from the story, *Voyage*, as Fenella, a little girl, makes her way with her father and her grandmother through the dock area to the ship in which they are to go on a short voyage :

> It was dark on the Old Wharf, very dark: the wool sheds, the cattle trucks, the cranes standing up so high, the little squat railway engine, all seemed carved out of solid darkness. Here and there on a rounded wood-pile, that was like the stalk of a huge black mushroom, there hung a lantern but it seemed afraid to unfurl its timid, quivering light in all that blackness.

The description is remarkable not merely for its economy of words but for its poetic quality. Only a poet can speak of a lantern 'unfurling' its 'quivering light' in the darkness. Here is another example from *Life of Ma Parker* - the London street along which the poor old woman, sick and sad, is struggling :

> It was cold in the street. There was a wind like ice. People went flitting by, very fast; the men walked like scissors, the women trod like cats. And nobody knew— nobody cared.

Sherwood Anderson was one of the earliest among the American short-story writers to discard the notion that plot is the most important element of a short story. To quote his own words,

> The plot notion did seem to me to poison all story-telling What was wanted, I thought, was form, not plot.
>
> . . . .

His short stories, particularly those in the volume, *Winesburg, Ohio*, contrast greatly with the technically perfect stories of Poe or the suavely clever stories of Bret Harte and O. Henry. In them plot and technique are almost entirely disregarded in an effort to present what appears to the writer as the simple truth. They are concerned primarily with the ordinary people in a town whose attempts at realising their true potential are thwarted by social conventions and pressures – men and women warped into grotesques by their unfulfilled lives, overwhelmed and bewildered by the complexity of the industrial age. *Hands*, for example, tells of Wing Biddlebaum who had an innocent passion for caressing living things and was driven from the town because of this misunderstood eccentricity. *The Strength of God* is the story of the religious Reverend Curtin Hartman who was obsessed with sexual desire until his 'cure' after an intense inner struggle in which he believed that 'God has manifested himself to me in the body of a woman'.

From the foregoing paragraphs it must be clear that realism, in some form or other, has been the method adopted by short-story writers ever since the days of Maupassant and Chekhov. Irving, Poe (who is often said to be the originator of the short story as a specific *genre*) and Hawthorne who wrote in the first half of the nineteenth century were romantics and dealt in their stories with the exaggerated, extraordinary, or horrible. In the latter half of the nineteenth century realism became the dominant literary movement. It emerged partly as a reaction to the subjectivity and sentimentalism that characterized much of the literature in the early part of the century. Realists attempted an honest representation of contemporary reality. They believed that life should be looked at *objectively* and represented in fiction with the least interference from the literary artist. Merimee, the French writer, for example, held the view that the story writer should be completely impersonal and objective, letting 'the thing' itself 'stand and speak before the reader'. Maupassant, the most influential French writer of short-stories, said in the preface to his novel *Pierre et Jean*:

> Each of us...forms for himself an illusion of the world which is poetic, sentimental, joyous, melancholy, unclear or dismal according to his nature. The writer has no other

> business than to reproduce faithfully this illusion... The great artists are those who force humanity to accept this illusion.

According to Chekhov, a story writer should maintain the objectivity of a chemist:

> To a chemist nothing on earth is unclean. A writer must be as objective as a chemist; he must put aside his personal subjective standpoint and must appreciate that manure piles play a very respectable part in the landscape; he must understand that evil passions are as inherent in life as good ones.

A new way of recording life—all aspects of life, the happy and sad, the beautiful and ugly, the good and evil, — realistically, with the utmost objectivity, was thus evolved.

The three realists who influenced short-story writers all over the world were Maupassant, Chekhov and Henry James. The stories of Maupassant are detached and cynical renderings of farmers, clerks, priests, prostitutes, and soldiers living ordinary lives. The characterization in them is rather superficial, without psychological analysis. Chekhov's realism is impressionistic: his stories are lyrical evocations of the moods of characters and atmosphere. Henry James is a psychological realist who probes the mind to understand man's motivations and follies — the 'historian of fine consciences' as his friend Joseph Conrad called him. The theme of a good number of his stories is the interaction of innocent and awkward Americans with refined but slightly decadent and unscrupluous Europeans.

In the early years of our century the short story moved from this objectivity and realism towards a more metaphoric symbolic representation. Realism was still there, but it was blended with symbolism. It is this blending of realism and symbolism, with overtones of poetry, that we find in the short stories of such writers as James Joyce, Sherwood Anderson, Katherine Mansfield, D, H. Lawrence and John Steinbeck. A large number of twentieth century stories are flavoured with a dash of irony. Perhaps irony

is the most effective way of illustrating the position of moderu man who feels his individual stature debilitated in the present depersonalized society and his self-esteem shattered by the theories of Freud. 'The writer who employs irony can protect himself from his disturbing material by assuming a position of emotional detachment'.[6]

After world War II, literary influences have been at work opposing the realistic and symbolic representation of life which was the characteristic feature of the short stories written in the early years of our century. The old utilitarian argument is heard against fiction, viz. that the examination of individual reality is not enough, and that all writers, even short-story writers, must be committed to some social cause or other. This argument ispossibly the outcome of depair and indignation at the sheer helplessness of the individual in modern scciety, and the feeling that writers can ill afford to be passive spectators to the gruesome spiritual tragedy that has befallen humanity. Some American writers of the 1960. abandoned realism altogether for their 'fables' which are comments on the present condition in the form of allegory, myth and parable. Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, John Barth's *The End of the Road*, Donald Barthelme's *See the Moon*? and Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* are examples of such 'fables'. In them the writers seem to be laughing the whole thing away, but there is intense pain in this laughter. Others like the French writer Alain Robbe-Grillet have experimented with presenting the human mind in a radically non-human world of things. They believe that they 'can no longer employ conventional plots because such devices presuppose a coherent, underdstendable universe which simply does not exist.

> These writers believe man has passed beyond the omnipotence of the individual to radically less anthropocentric consciousness. Therefore, these writers feel justified in eliminating metaphors and in focussing on things - the *Thereness* of things -divested of all human associations. This is a kind of dehumanized realism in which man moves through an alien environment.[7]

Such trends apart there has not been any remarkable break between the short stories before and after World War II. In theme and technique no significant difference is discernible. As for realism and objectivity in tne representation of life, we find them in almost all the short stories of present-day writers, though in varying degrees.

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6. Douglas A. Hughes, *Studies in Short Fiction* 7. Ibed

STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN PUTHUMAIPITHAN'S SHORT STORIES

M. S. PRABAKARAN

The Short Story is one of most ancient and enduring literary forms. But it secured recognision as a selfconscious genre only in the beginning of the 19th century. It is a product of a special confluence of literary and cultural forces. But in Tamil it is a hybrid. The Short Story writers in Tamil were acutely responsive to the development of English and European Romanticism. The local and fragmented social experience colliding with cosmopolitan artistic vision was conducive to the growth of this genre. To understand the essential qualities and complex potentialities of the Tamil Short Story is to explore origin and subsequent development. It is after Va. Ra 's departure from the Manikkoti camp that the Manikkoti received an impetus. Thc Manikkoti Movement shaped the genre perfectly and encouraged the Short Story writers to publish their Stories. The influence of western writers, the impact made by the translated works of Tagore and Premchand and the stimulus offered by Va. Ve. Su. Iyer who is the Father of Tamil Short Story ser ved Manikkoti writers to fertilize the field of Short Story with their latent talent of wrtiing stories. They experimented with new form, techniques and even went to the extent of revolutionizing the subject-matter.

It is Ku. Pa. Rajagopalan who have from to this genre. In Tamil it is Puthumaipithan who experimented with it and made the genre attain respectability and it is Kaiki Krishnamurthy who popularised the short Story among Tamil-reading public.

As a technique realism may logically handle any subject-matter but it has chiefly been concerned with common places of every day life and the middle and lower social classes. when the short story writer is looked at from this angle, Puthumaipithan is a realist. It is he, who articulates his realist position through his writings,

essentially makes a plea for common sense fidelity to the realities of contemporary life. He wielded his pen like a scalpel. He understood that the truth about Tamil could not be told in a transplanted literary language but only in the rhymes and figures of local speech. At his hand, like that of Maupassant and Chekhov, the luminous local detail takes on a broad, symbolic meaning. He is not regional as a few critics label him but Indian and his entire exitence as a writer validates the belief that the most profound rational truths must be expressed through observed details of one time and one place. That is why the regional writers who are really realists broke through the genteel tradition to record the actual rhythms of everyday speech. The writers who lived before Puthumaipithan were complacent enough to make use of standard forms ranging from the anecdote to the allegorical tale. Self-conscious writers like Puthumaipithan, P, S. Ramaiah, Sri Chellappa Ku. Pa. Ra. and a host of others began to explore the effects which the new subject-matter and freedom of expression would have on fictional treatment, using terms such as realism and naturalism. Though the imaginative romance in Puthumipithan lifted everyday reality to a level of symbolic trance he felt that the practice of romance by the ordinary artist was an evasion of reality that leads to melodrama and sentimentality. He wanted to be true to his accurate observation of the Tamil scene although it is limited. In my view, Puthumaipithan is very much interested in the smiling aspects of life as he seeks the universe in the individual rather than the social interests even though he depends largely on the social interests.

After introducing Puthumaipithan as a realist I should like to critically analyse some of his short stories. The total number of short stories he wrote is 99 out of which more than 15 stories have little story content. They may be called sketches. His stories can be grouped under three broad divisions.

(i) Stories classified as having continuous structure,

(ii) Stories classified as having discontinuous structure,

(iii) Stories classified as having static structure.

Most of his stories belong to those with discontinuous and static structures. But in stories having static structure his superb quality is revealed.

In 'Kodukapulimaram', Palvannampillai'. 'Nigumbalai', Puthiya koondu' the incidents are chronologically set which is called continous structure.

Backflash method of narration, inversion of details of the incidents are used in stories such 'Vinayagachaturthi', ' Iru Ulagangal', 'Chithi'.

In 'Puthiya Oli', 'Pithukuli', 'Mananizhal', 'Vazhkai', 'Vadamalligai', 'Gopalapuram,' 'Kaditham', 'Manitha Yanthiram', 'Nisamum Ninaippum', 'Kalanum Kizhaivum', 'Poikuthirai', Puthumaipithan deals with a mood. These stories fall into the category of static structure which is otherwise called Literature of Mood. It is Chekhov who introduced this type of stories in Russian Literature and Puthumaipithan, on whom Chekhov's inflence is irresistible, introduced this in Tamil. He also experimented with the stream of consciousness technique in his stories and to a very large extent he was very successful. Among the most modern short story writers mention may be made of Mouni and La. Sa. Ramamirtham who make use of this technique. Since space and time are short, I would like to limit my area of study. Stories that deal with the literature of Mood and stories that stand as perfect examples of stream of consciousness technique are critically analysed here.

In 'Vadamalligai', the widow Sarasu is driven back to her past life on the day when the nuptials of his brother takes place A young man who has been noticing her all along tells her that he is willing to marry her. But Sarasu refuses and says if he is affectionate to her, that will do. Also says that she is after all a woman havingt he feelings and aspirations of an ordinary woman The richness and flavour are communicated from the special quality of the author's personality, by having the incidents of the story passed through his mind. As he reflects and comments upon the

experience either his own or someone else's the story is invested with a quality of intimacy and immediacy and perhaps grows bigger with the meanings. The story within a story' is a variation of this method. The intensity of the moment is sharply and immediately registered through dialogue as well as narration by the author which is used to commnnicate subtle gradation of emotion and meaning and to catch delicate shades of meaning in sound association. In 'Mananizhal' a conflict within the characters is delineated. 'He' wants to extricate himself from the clutches of 'her' love but in vain and she has completely surrendered herself to him the act of which he is fully aware of. The conflict starts fram the point at which he wants to divulge the secrect to her. As Dr. Ramalingam puts it, the vivid description of the internal conflict in these two characiers is a perfect illustration of the literature of mood. Increased interest in psychology which is stimulated in part by the elevation of psycho-analysis as a science, in part by our growing awareness of pressures on the individual in modern society has resulted in a growing number of stories with major emphasis on psychological disturbances and subjective elements.

In stories such as 'Kaettraravu', 'Vazhakai', 'Antru Iravu', 'Vinayaga Chathurthi', 'Sayankala Mayakkam', 'Chellammal', 'Ninai vapathai' Puthumaipithan experiments with the stream of conscious technique. Physical defects and illness played a significant role in this novel pattern. In France Marcel Proust, a sickly man and a semi-recluse was deeply introspective and self-absorbed. In Ireland James Joyce, nearly blind from childhood, lived in the world of sound. In England Virginia Woolf on whom the sudden death of her brother, the dreadful effects of the First World War the hindrance caused by the towering personality of her father, ideal companionship provided by her husband, chief of all, her unhappy life gave an irresistible incentive to search for a new method as a means to probe the inner side of her personality. But in the case of Puthumaipithan none of these can be attributed. He wanted to experiment with the new technique which greatly infuenced him. Moreover a new perspective requires a new tech-

nique to explore new territories of human mind. An acute need to pose inner problems and project their inner life before the world necessitated the invention in the case of Western writers and adoption in the case of Puthumaipithan and a few others of this new technique. He is able to achieve the technical mastery partly by using images and partly restricting the time of the action. In 'Kaettraravu' a single, small incident and uncontrollable thoughts form the basis of the story. One can feel as if he is a lotus eater throughout the story. While in Paramasivam Pillai's mind reel after reel about his life inside the womb is given, he is bitten by a snake and dead. But the flood of time without getting itself stagnated flows undisturbed. In 'Chellammal' life itself is a struggle, instead of struggle in life, to Brahamanayagam Pillai who nurses his wife, a chronic patient. He works in a shop during day time and the rest of the time is devoted by him to attending on his sick wife. To his wife Chellammal, who does not know anything except disease and suffering, death is a permanent relief but the days he spends with his wife unfold themselves in his mind. The story starts with the death of Chellammal and ends with the burial. Stream of consciousness type of narrative is a new and radical development from subjectivism. It is an attempt fo document the whole world of sense in a minute and to catch tugitive thought in their progress through the mind in their moment.

Lastly a few words on his prose style. His contribution to the genre and prose style is remarkable. During his period the Tamil Short Story underwent a quick metamorphosis both in content and form. The vast expanding frontiers of the short story proved and prove to be flourishing. These new areas of experience have invigorated the language of the writers. Stories of each region provie a faithful record of local customs and dialects. This increasingly growing awareness of Tamil writers of each district or region with its local voice forces us to reassess the heritage of the Tamils. Puthumaipithan had an ear for actual speech and eyes for significant details which resulted in the colloquial style. His mastery of the spoken-word, the allusive adjectives, and the use of irony create the proper atmosphere for

the stories. The texture of the stories is gripping and alive; his style is suggestive, subtle and precise. If we can feel the magic spell of words in the poetry of Bharathi and Bharathidasan, we can feel the same in the prose of Puthumaipithan. I shall conclude my paper with a fitting close by reproducing in translation what is said in the ending part of a story, 'Avatharam' by him.

> "Both of them met each other. that met him. He also met .... Both sat together but became one. In him is found that and in that he finds himself."

In this 'that' refers to the genre, short story and he refers to Puthumaipithan, to put it in a different phraseology Puthumaipithan is one with the short story; he and this genre can hardly be separated. The two are like the form and content in modern poetry.

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INDIAN ETHOS REFLECTED IN THE INDIAN SHORT STORY.

Dr. N. RADHAKRISHNAN

The Short Story is not anything new to India. It was a recognised literary form in India centuries before its popularisation in modern times. The ancient stories which were largely moral were in circulation through oral transmission. A later development was the inclusion of the stories in various literary devices such as the Cluster Stories, Chain stories and Frame stories. With the emergence of printing and publishing there has been a steady growth of this particular genre in almost all the Indian languages. The writers found in this form an effective medium to present a slice of life in terms of contemporary realities. The short story no doubt has now widened its range, and increased its appeal. The output is enormous and there is practically no literary journal without a short story or two. No doubt this appeal is due in part to the rush of modern life, for some people do not have the time for a spacious novel and ask for something short and snappy. This the short story can supply. With a swift brief stroke it can prove its effect and still leave the readers without any feeling of incompleteness.

What then is the Indian situation? No one literature can claim that it is the representative of Indian literature. The vast spectrum of writings in the regional literatures and English by Indians constitutes what one may call Indian literature. Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar sums up the situation as follows :

"It is the commonly experienced reality in India that human speech is a music of many notes, and men, places, regions are generally bilingual, trilingual or multilingual. As I take a walk on the Marina in Madras, I hear snatches of Tamil, Telugu, English Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali and my ear receives the rhythmic sounds almost as a caress of conquest. More often than not, the mind is coaxed into semantic involvement of some sort, and always there is the deeper listening of the soul, human speech being a

means of forging the communion of fellowship with one another and circumambient Nature too. At different times in different places, I have found myself exposed to the diverse living languages of the country and have learned to live with this fact of multi-linguism and cultural pluralism It is said of the Tamil mystic poet, Tirumoolar, that when he traversed the country fifteen hundred years ago from Himalayas to Kanya-kumari, he found that while the people spoke several languages the same heart spoke through them all. In the bigger Indian temples we find, besides the presiding Deity, numerous other gods, goddesses, saints and satellites, all of whom receive worship at some time or other. On the same hill or upland, or in the same locality, there are seen nestling together cheek by **jowl** temple, mosque, church, mandir, ashram, all enacting co-existence in a way that must disarm intolerance. We seem thus to be conditioned in India to evince general interest in the manifoldness of our environment, and to be capable at the same time of selective concentration on some thing. It is the faculty of double vision, to be able to see the hills and sky beyond and also to read a page of closely printed poetry or gaze and admire a miniature.

Indian writers have shown an awareness that Short Story is neither a shortened novel nor a fragment of the novel. The writer can't aim at depicting life in all its 'variety and complexity'. He should realize that a Short Story can only be a concentrated and emphatic expression of a moment's experience that will produce a unity of totality on the reader's mind. Maupassant, Chekhov, Mark Twain, P. G. Wodehouse, Stephen Leacock in Western Litereture and a host of Indian writers have successfully made use of this form of popular fiction.

Most of the writers of fiction in India have been experimenting with this form and we have today excellent short stories that can be compared to the best in any literature. Tagore, Tarashankar, Mulkraj Anand, K. A. Abbas, R. K. Narayan, Khushwant Singh, Kishan Chander, Amrita Pritam, to mention a few, are among the best practioners of this literary form.

Rabindranath Tagore pioneered the Short Story in Indian Literature. To him his stories were "the life of Bengal seen

through the window of my moving boat." His stories were characterised by the concept of a totality of life with imaginative romanticism and idealism *The Hungry Stones*, *The Cabuliwallah*, *Post Master*, *The Castaway*, *The Śupreme Vision*, *The Babus of Nayanjore* - all these stories show this tendency. Tagore found eloquent admirers in almost all parts of India. Prominent among them are Laxminath Bezboroa, (Assamese), Aktar Mohi-ud-din (Kashmiri), Banaphool, Masti, Venkatesa Iyengar.

World war I, the Russian Revolution and the Gandhian Revolution provided the Indian writers with a mine of themes to draw from. It is at this time the element of realism crept into the Indian Short Story. Social evils, economic disparities, and similar social problems attracted the attention of the writers. A significant shift of emphasis from the butterfly world of the young lovers to the huts of the common man became the subject very often. Jayakanthan's Tamil Story *The Staff of Life* and Na. Parthasarathy's story *The Right Spiralled Conch* were about the toiling masses. The progressive movement aided by the communists released a great wave of enthusiasm which spread to most of the literatures of India. Mulk Raj Anand, Sarat Chandra, Yashpal, Abbas, Basheer, T. S. Pillai, Kesav Dev became the champions of the down-trodden and surprisingly enough some of the best Short Stories of Indian literature were produced by this group. The frontal attack this group of writers made on the citadels of caste, social disparities, capitalists and and other exploiters and vested interests had such power and vigour that soon these institutions started crumbling down. *Drought* by Sarat Chandra presents a graphic picture of the sufferings of a tenant in a Zamindari village during a drought.

These writers by and large have been showing a strong commitment to social change. Nothing escapes their attention. Caste, class, communal restriction; superstition religious, taboos, marriage customs, political unrest, subordination of women and to some extent evils of partition have been the major areas on which our writers have been concentrating. While these writers portray Indian life with idealistic value in view,

A few others have tried to present the Indian sensibilities as reflected in the contemporary life with all its foibles, with a comic vision. The number of such writers who have succeeded in this attempt is very small. We have gifted writers who often deal with serious subjects, but to stand at a distance and look at things as a disinterested observer with amused delight requires greater artistic talent.

Gandhi, Freud and Marx influenced every writer of note. The Indian intellectuals were shaken and each of these great men in his own way unleashed intellectual and political passions. Mulk Raj Anand, Premchand, Kishan Chandr, M. Varadarajan, Bhave, Bharathi, Vallathol, Jayakanthan, Shanta Rama Rao, Khushwant Singh, K. A. Abbas – all came under the influence of these great men in different ways.

Marx and Freud introduceed the scientific spirit and have liberated the Indian writing from unscientific $uperstitions. The younger writers felt emboldened with Marx and Freud and they could now write about sex with more freedom. Khushwant Singh's 'The Rape' and Padma Raju's "On the Boat" are the results of this new found liberty. These two are tales of passion and love.

The literary Renaissance of India after the independence saw the emergence of a powerful group of women writers who try to desist. Indian life through personal visions, Anita Desai Attia Habibulla, Santa Rama Rao, Nayantara Sahgal,are the prominent among them. 'Who cares' typifies the vigour and clarity of the men generation forming its values for itself.

There is a good number of writers whose stories depict a gloomy picture of this country highlighting destitution, squalour, and violence.

The pervasive sense of alientation which now dominates the modern fiction had not entered the Indian Short Story until the 1960s as a strong motif. But soon it became a recurring theme especially with the younger writers. In a number of Short

Stories a deep anguish, a sense of fundamental purposelessness of life, isolation and despair form the chief thematic preoccupations. Many of them depict an isolated man pitted against other men, against society, sometimes engaged in a hopeless quest for his identify or in a self-conscious exploration of the act of writing itself. In recent years there has been a sizable body of writing in Hindi, Bengali and English dealing with the theme of Indians living abroad a rootless, restless group of people who for social and official reasons make these countries their homes but are forced to take on two nationalities, suspected in the country. of domicile and aliens in their home country. Most of the younger writers have introduced alienation in their writings and very often many such attempts instead of producing the desired effect verge on the comic side producing a negative feeling. We have the classic example of the protagonist in one of the short stories of a leading writer of fiction in Malayalam whe forgets his own name. To this writer forgetting one's name is a symptom of alienation.

What is Indianness? To get an answer one should ask what is India and who is an Indian? The writers should project a total vision of India, interpreting her aspirations and hopes. This could be done only through judicious choice of subjects, organisation of materials and an artistic play of sentiment.

Many are eloquent examples of the Indian tradition and prove that the Indian writer works within the tradition whether his medium is English, Tamil, Bengali, Urdu, Kannada or Malayalam or Hindi.

Many stories reveal a rare sensitivity born out of deep feeling and an ability to record impressions. The sensibilities communicated by these stories are recognisably Indian. Many writers make an attempt to interpret the Indian. Many writers make an attempt to interpret the Indian experience through isolated affirmation of human spirit.

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"I don't think I am alone in suffering from a certain resistance of Indian literature. The unpronounceable names, the

long-windedness and dullness of the translations, perplex and finally irritate me."

This is what Connolly, a liberal Englishman wrote about Indian literature. Mr. Connolly seems to forget the fact that he was commenting on a literature which is foreign to him. Does he forget for a moment that genuine literature is a reflection of life and society of the country which producees it. Any Indian writer worth the name would try to write about only what moves him and about his milieu. No Indian ever complained about similar difficulties when he studied foreign literatures including that of the country to which Mr. Connolly belongs.

Now, let meconclude this paper with a quotation from Krishna Kripalani. "Indian literature has always presented a panorama rather than a scene, One has to look around and up and below, to see its many landscapes in proper perspective. If India is a land of contrasts, of sweltering heat and perennial snow, of fabled case and brutalising want, of the wisdom's clam and the clamour of ignorance, so is its literature many faced, msny voiced, here primitive there sophisticated, now inspired, now imitative, at once sublime and grotesue, exhilarating and trite. It is not easy to answer the question: What is modern Indian literature like? It is like literature anywhere else, and it is like literature nowhere else. A pantheon of many gods, with some of the gods many-headed and many - armed."

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AS A SHORT-STORY WRITER

R. JOTHIPRAKASH

As narrators of imagined events the Indians have no equals in the world. The people of India have always had a natural talent for fiction. Rabindranath Tagore, the fruit of Indian tradition, excelled in the art of telling stories. The instinct for story-telling in him found new channels of expression through the study of the great Western fiction writers. Mediocre writers imitate others. But Tagore had real talent and originality and utilised the methods, attitudes and techniques of Western fiction in the portrayal of Indian situations and the evocation of genuine Indian mood and atmosphere. It was Rabindraneth Tagore who wrote, for the first time in India, novels and stories which may be described as modern in the true sense of the term.

The Bengalis always proudly proclaim, "What Bengal thinks today, the whole India will think tomorrow". The pioneering role played by Tagore in writing short stories has largely affe-cted the growth of modern fiction in other Indian languages. For example, in Tamil, Poet Bharati, who is considered to be one of the founding fathers of modern fiction in Tamil, got inspira-tion from Tagore. In fact, he translated a few of the short stories of Tagore in Tamil and they paved the way for the growth of modern Tamil fiction.

Rabindranath's contribution to Indian fiction is unique and remains unsurpassed to this day. The first collection of stories was published in 1894, the last in 1940. His fiction like his poetry, presents a diversity of themes, situation, mood and technique which has few parallels in the literary history of any nation. Although in the majority of cases he takes his situat-ions and characters from the life of Bengal his feeling for India as an entity is transparent in his fiction, no less than in his poems and songs. And the human significance of his stories transcends not only regional but national boundaries as well.

His deep humanism is the common factor which gives unity to his creative expression in the field of fiction. His sympathy is for all who suffer, irrespective of whether the suffering is caused by social pressures, by sheer chance or simply by human weakness and folly. His protest is against all injustice and oppression, whether the perpetrator is the foreign ruler, the village money lender, the city bureaucrat, or the mother-in law. And yet, altnough he depicts misery and inequity as aspects of human life as a whole, his concern is not with humanity in the abstract but with concrete human beings, real persons.

It is in this sense that Tagore is a realist. His predecessors placed their characters in situations that were artificially contrived Their experiences, arose from unusual or fortuitous circumstances. Tagore does not avoid the unusual or even the romantic element in life. But his artistic grasp enables him to transform the unusual into the credible. In stories like Cabuliwallah, we find unusual characters and situations. But we accept them without any reservations. When we make the acquaintance of Tagore's characters we often have the feeling that we have met their counterparts somewhere.

Tagore is a realist in the sense that he does not paint idyllic pictures of life, he does not exclude the ugly, the irrational or the immoral from his purview. He is also a realist in the sense that the actions performed by the people he creates spring from a configuration of external compulsives and inner drives. Realism does not prevent him from recognising that, in ideals and values. Tagore the story writer, like Tagore the Philosopher recognises that man has in him an infinite as well as a finite element; and that nobility, love and calmness are as 'real as depravity, hatred and tension foibles and frailties that we have but who can surprise as by flashes of profound wisdom or by acts of supreme self sacrifice.

Tagore was the first Indian writer of the modern age to produce stories of 'ideas' besides stories of 'narration'. Tagore subordinated in most of his stories narration to the need of

communicating a central idea. Not that he is indifferent to descriptions - particularly descriptions of nature that they acquire a lyrical quality rarely seen in the work of other writers. But below some pivotal concept or idea is conveyed. in a subtle, unobstrusive manner, the psychologist works side by side with the story teller.

While reading his stories we are also struck by his philosophic detachment his ability to pierce the veil of the particular and take us into the presence of the universal. He depicts love in all its intensity. as expressed in the actual relationships between persons. But he also gives us glimpses of a kind of love which transcends mere physical gratification.

In the story 'Renunciation' Tagore is seen as a nonconformist, ready to expose social conservatism and give a call to revolt.

Some of his short stories have everything that one might expect from a masterpiece: brilliant delineation of characters, a story which offers surprises till the very end; a fluent, powerful style interspersed with bursts poetic imagery and absolute sincerity.

His short stories show robust realism and closeness to actual life, side by side with a highly poetic and imaginative recreation of what is observed. We also find in them tenderness pathos, patriotism and humanity, and philosophical vision.

The very smallness of the canvas provided by the short story compels Tagore to prune the superfluous and saves him from diffuseness. In some of Tagore's short stories, there is a clarity and directness which we rarely see in his novels. The number of characters is limited to two or three. Their personalities are brought out vividly. The action is brief, there are no sub-plots, and the reader's interest is sustained throughout.

Though Tagore achieved world fame through his poems and plays he delighted in writing short stories. In a letter he says.

"If I do nothing but write short stories I am happy, and I make a few readers happy. The main cause of happiness is that the people about whom I write become my companions: they are with me when I am confined to my room in the rains".

Simple, ordinary people–children as well as grown-ups whom he met during his stay in the countryside, provided Tagore ideas for some of his best stories. There was a postman who had the strange habit of narrating all sorts of impossible and fantastic occurances with a solemn face and Tagore made him the central figure in his famous story 'Postmaster'.

Tagore wrote stories about all classes of Indian society. Some of the most moving of his stories deal with the evils of caste system and the miserable lot of the Bengali woman. 'A wife's Letter' and Number One', may be mentioned as examples of stories of this type. In some others, as in 'The Unknown Girl' the humiliation and suffering caused by the dowry system are underlined. The petty jealousies and tensions which often lie hidden behind the calm facade of the Hindu joint family provide themes for about half a dozen stories.

In some of the stories the supernatural has been introduced. The best story in this class is 'Hungry Stories', narrated by a traveller during a railway journey. The narrator spends a few days in a deserted mansion, which was once the pleasure-palace of a Sultan. One night a strange woman beckons to him in a vision. He follows her, but stumbles and the apparition vanishes. The experience is repeated the following night. The empty rooms seemed to be peopled with figures of the past. The narrator learns that the cruel deeds that were once done here have made the very stones accursed. These stones have become hungry and devour any one who spends more than three nights in the palace. The story ends with an unexpected twist. We never get to know how the narrator, who is obviously alive and well, managed to circumvent the curse.

Of the two hundred odd stories written by Tagore, about twenty are pearls of the purest variety They are beautifully constructed The characterisation is lucid and convincing. He views human existence in its wholeness. He dwells on much that is tragic and painful, and shows us man's inhumanity to man. But even from the most melancholy of his narratives we do not come away with a sense of despair. What we see is man's frailty, not life's futility. Take Cabuliwallah, for instance. We do not even know the name of the man from Kabul'. He is a hefty Pathan, dressed in baggy, dirty clothes. His hands are rough, chin unshaven. His ways are crude. He gets into a difficulty, becomes violent, and lands in a jail-father-in-law's house as he calls it. And yet this man, apparently so coarse and harsh cultivates the friendship of a little five year old girl, a chatterbox called Mini. Cabuliwalla and Mini spend hours together. The Pathan carries in his pocket a piece of paper as a memento of his own little daughter; not a picture, not even written words, but simply the smudges left by tiny fingers on crumpled, oil-stained piece of paper. And because such a girl exists, thousands of miles away, in some village perched on a mountain in Afghanistan, this burly Pathan weeps when he is told that he cannot see Mini any more.

Tagore exhibits his perfect understandin of child-psychology in some of the stories. A child is always, candid, ingenuous and pure in mind and full of fancies. 'Post Master' and 'Cabuliwallah' give us the working of innocent minds. The problems of adolescent boys are amply dealt with in the story 'Home Coming'.

SHORT STORIES IN MALAYALAM

P. V. RUDRAVARIAR

The major part of modern Malayalam literature is short stories. There is no other form of literature as popular as short story. Even in the latter part of 19th century the short story secured recognition in Malayalam literature. Then the growth of this form of literature was fast developing. How did it happen? What are the reasons for the speedy growth of the short story? Let me give a reply in brief.

1. Increase in the number of periodicals,
2. The limited time at the disposal of modern reader.
3. The spread of education.
4. There is no hard and fast rule of how to write a short story
5. There is no concrete form for a short story.
6. The writer is more independent when compared to other forms of literature.
7. By nature people are interested in reading and listening to stories.

These are the main reasons for the sudden growth of the short story.

As for plot, Rasabhava, characterisation the short story gives full freedom to its writer. Because of this, even the second rate and third rate writers tried their hands at short story. What was the result? The field is widened. To some extent the crop was also good in quality. I do not want to dwell on the historical and literary aspects of short story at length. I would like to mention only a few great short story writers whom I believe great.

EARLY PERIOD:

The form of short story is an imported one. In Malayalam all types of forms of literature sprang from Sanskrit in olden days, But as far as the short story is concerned the form is adopted from Western literature like novel. To the growth of Malayalam short story English has contributed much. The early writers tried to imitate the western writers. The early short story was perfect in form.

1. It had a beginning, middle and end.
2. It had a well structured plot.
3. Characterisation through dialogue and description.
4. Sometimes there would be a moral lesson at the end.

Plot is based on either historical or social incident. The prominent writers of this period are Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, M. R. K. C, K. Sukumaran, Oduvil Kunhikrishna Menon etc. Their stories are full of imagination, creativity, and humour. There was no commitment to any ideology such as social reform, though these stories played an important role in that aspect also. The reading public loved those writers very much. The educated people had something to read in Malayalam when they got some leisure.

We must remember here E. V. Krishna pillai as a popular writer. His style is flowery. His language is very simple, but forceful. Moreover humour and satire adorn his short stories. His stories were the most popular stories of his time. He has created unforgettable characters. Sometimes he makes us smile, sometimes he makes us laugh. The way of his description is so subtle that no one can imitate him.

THE GOLDEN PERIOD OF MALAYALAM SHORT STORY

The spirit of freedom struggle spread throughout the country. The number of educated people increased. The differences that persisted in society were known to common man. The exploitation by rich and upper class people became so plain. All kinds

of inequalities and injustice prevailed in the fields of labour, religion, agriculture, industry, education, administration and so on. People understood about slavery and its bad results. Under these circumstances no writer can simply sit. He cannot run away from the cruel realities of daily life problems. He cannot sit in an ivory tower and sing songs of romance and adventure. Writers are basically humanitarians. What one sees and hears should be powerflly expressed. It is his duty to point out these anomalies and find a solution. So time moulds a writer. Writers found that the short stories are a power ful medium. Because of these reasons short stories developed in Twenties, Thirties, and Forties very quickly. Many writers of creativity found this field a fertile soil to sow their seeds for reform and transformation.

Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, popularly known as Thakazhi, Kesavadev, Vaikkom Muhammad Basheer, Ponkunnam Varkey, S. K Pottakkad and a host of others deserve mention. The main aim of all these writers is to bring reform in the society, even though they have got their own individuality, their own way of expression.

Thakzhi may have got some inspiration from Western literature. But his creation is basically his own, I may express it in Malayalam. He is blessed with 'MoulikaBhavana' - What are the special qualities of Thakazhi? Analysing the mind of characters, simple language, direct expression without any adornment are some of the qualities of his short stories. Reálism is the soul of his short story. With striking sentences he pierces into the heart of eader. What he wants to say is said bluntly. The slavery of Kuttanadan Pulayan, the misaries of the scavangers of Alleppey town, the poverty of daily coolies, the sorrows of fishermen-such are the themes of his stories. His stories have helped in many ways to eradicate all these social evils. He bluntly says the naked realities of life without any guise, it may be prostitution sex or any such kind. There is no veil for Thakazhi.

Kesavadev is also in another way a pucca realist. He dramatically expresses the emotional clashes of characters, He

boldly attacks exploitation and the discrimination among different classes. He also belongs to the group of writers who fought for the uplift of the oppressed class as Thakazhi. Oppose, this is his motto in life and literature. Though Thakazhi and Dev preferred to be leftists we cannot trust Dev as a pucca leftist. Sometimes he becomes a pucca communist, sometimes an anti communist. He is the author of a number of short stories. He propagates his ideas in a most powerful way.

Vaikkom Muhammad Basheer is a class by himself. He can be called "Ekanthapathika." Some critics believe that he is the greatest genius writer of the time. Humorous narration, characters of caricature, expressions of innermost emotions, wonderful language, excellent presentation are his special characteristics. He ridiculed the superstitions of his own religion. He has written stories which can be included as a part of political satire. Though the common reader cannot understand fully the satire he can read it for pleasure.

Ponkunnam Varkey is also a veteran writer of that time. He severly criticised the injustice prevailing in his own Catholic religion. He opened the door of Church and nunnery. He is also a revolutionary writer.

We can see the most beautiful presentation of Romantic imagination in the stories of S. K. Pottakkad. He is more interested in the peculiarities of human minds than in social reformation. His canvass is so wide that so many unforgettable characters and incidents are drawn on it. If I may borrow an expression from famous critic Joseph Mundasseri, S K's stories carry the quality of 'upabhadratha' (perfection of form). What to say and how to say - he knows both. In short Roopa and Bhava are so excellent in his stories. The language he uses is sweet and impressive. He is also very fond of keeping the end in suspense (Parinamagupti).

P. C. Kuttikrishnan, known by his pen name 'Uroob' has also in his own way contributed to this form of literature. His way of narration is appreciated by the people very much. Humour,

characterisation, experience of life are cordially interconnected in his stories.

Karur Neelakandha Pillai's name is also to be mentioned. He was a teacher. In his short stories we can see poverty of elementary school teacher, reflected in it. His way of expression is very simple. He is a born story teller.

I will be doing injustice if I do not make a mention of two women writers, namely, Lalithambika Antharjanam and B. Saraswathi Amma. Antharajanam wrote stories bringing to light the sorrows and sufferings of Namboodiri women. who were under Purrdda during that time. Antharjanam is a Namboodiri woman. So she knows them fully. Both these women contributed to the cause of womenfolk

Late M. P. Paul, a great critic, wrote a book called 'Cherukatha Prasthanam'' which is treated as the Bible of Rules of Malayalam short stories. But now-a-days things have changed' ''Old order changeth yeilding place to new''. In 1950 K.T. Mohamed won the first prize for the best short story written in India which is a land mark in the history of Malayalam short stories. The name of the story is 'Kannugal' (eyes).

MOST MODERN PERIOD:

Even now the most popular literary field is the short story. Among modern writers M. T. Vasudevan Nair is prominent. The village where he was born is the main source of his inspira. tion. The sorrows and pains of his own villagers form the basis fo- themes. The sorrows of individual is universalized by him. He does not give much importance to social reforms etc. Constructing sentences which have inner meanings is his peculiarity. The life and culture of village attracts him much. Parappurattu is also to be mentioned as a good short story writer.

There are so many other writers. Vaisakhan, Kakkanadan, Ekalavyan, Punathil Kunjabdulla. Thus goes the name list. One cannot estimate the genuineness of present writers' stories at this juncture. Time is the able evaluator of writers. Those who stand the test of time can alone be taken for a critical study as this-Let us wait and see.

தமிழ்ச் சிறுகதை - இன்று

ஜயந்தன்

இலக்கியம் என்பதே ஒரு மனித மேம்பாட்டுச் சாதனம் என்பதை உணர்கிற ஒரு ஆசிரியன், தன்னை ஈர்த்த வாழ்க்கையின் ஏதாவதொரு புள்ளியை எடுத்துக்கொண்டு, அந்த பொருளில் ஆழ்ந்து அதைத் தன் சுயமாக்கிக் கொண்டு, தனக்கு சுபாவமானதொரு வடிவத்தில் தன் தனித்துவமான மொழிநடையில், பொருளின் எல்லை மீருமல் தெளிவுற வரிவடிவமாக்கும் பட்சத்தில் வெற்றி கொள்ளும் அந்த சிருஷ்டி சிறந்த சிறு கதையாகி விடுகிறது,

இந்தச் சிறுகதைகள் வாசகன் கையிலிருந்துகொண்டு அவனைப் பற்றி அவனிடமே- அவனே அறியாதவைகளைக்கூட - பேசும்,

சமூகத்தின் பொதுப்பிரச்சனையை, பொதுச்சந்தோசத்தை பொதுச் சோகத்தை எடுத்துக்கூறி தனி மனிதனை அவன் சமூக மனிதன் என்பதையும் காட்டும்,

அன்று வரை முகிழ்த்த மானுட சிந்தனைகளில் கழிக்க வேண்டியதை கழித்து, இந்த ஆசிரியனின் சிந்தனையைக் கூட்டி கற்பனை வள பேழையில் வைத்துக் கொடுக்கும்,

தாங்கள் இந்த சமூகத்தின் குழந்தைகளே என்பதையும், தங்கள் அன்னையர், தந்தையர் இந்த வாசகர்தாம் என்பதையும் சொல்லி மனம் புல்லரிக்க வைக்கும்,

தாங்கள் ஒரு ஆத்ம விசாரணையிலிருந்து துள்ளி விழுந்து எத்தனையோ ஆத்மாக்களை விசாரணை செய்யப் போகிற அதிகாரிகள் என்பதைக் காட்டும்.

அது தேடும் - உண்மையை - விடிவை.

பூமியின் அதிர்வுகளை மோப்பங்கண்டு, விடியப்போகும் ஒரு புதிய சமுதாயத்திற்கு ''பையா தயாராகு'' என்று சொல்லும்.

அவனோடு போராடும்
போராடத் தூண்டும்
அவனோடு போர்க்களமும் போகும்

அவனை தன்னைப்போல் அழகாக்கும்
பதப்படுத்தும்
வழிகாட்டும்
சத்திய தரிசனத்தை அவனுக்கு சாத்தியமாக்கும்
அவன் தோளில் நின்று ''மானுடன் வெல்லும்-வெல்லும்''
என்று கூத்தாடும்.

இது ஒரு பக்கம், மறுபக்கம்: மானுடக் கடமை உணர்வு எதுவு-மற்று, கண்டதே காட்சி, கொண்டதே கோலமாய், வாழ்ந்தால் போது-மென்ற உணர்வில், எழுத்தும் ஒரு வயிற்றுப் பிழைப்பே என்ற வடிவெடுத்து, தன் எழுத்துக்களால் ஊரும் உலகமும் எக்கேடு கெட்டுப் போனாலென்ன: எனக்கு வேண்டியது காசு என்றுபேசி, வாசகனுக்கு எது பிடிக்குமோ அதை அவனுக்கு திகட்டும் வரை கொடுக்கத் தயாராக இருக்கிற ஒரு பங்களா விரும்பும் வேசையின் சாகசத்தோடு தனது Craft manshipஐ வளர்த்து பயன் படுத்தும் மஞ்சள் பேனாக் காரனின் கையில் பிறக்கும் சிறுகதை.

மனிதனை வெறியனாக்கும்
பணம் பறிக்கும்
குழி பறிக்கும்
மொத்தத்தில் மனித நாகரீகத்தையே காவு கேட்கும்.
மயக்கும்
போதையூட்டும்
சீரழிக்கும்
மூளைச் சலவை செய்யும்

முதலிலே சொன்ன அந்த சீரிய இலக்கியமாகிய ஓர் அற்புதம்-ஆச்சர்யம் - மந்திரம்: பிறகு சொன்ன நச்சிலக்கியமாகிய, அழிவு-சூனியம் - விஷம், இவை தற்காலத் தமிழ் சிறுகதையில் எப்படி நேர்ந்து கொண்டிருக்கின்றன. நேர முடியும். இதன்மேல் ஒரு தத்துவ பூர்வமான ஒரு பார்வையே இக்கட்டுரை.

ஒரு குறிப்பிட்ட கால கட்டத்திற்குள்ளேயே ஒரு சமுதாயத்திலேயே, ஒரு மொழியிலேயே ஏன் இப்படி பல முரண்பட்ட கோணங்களில் எழுத்து வெளிப்பாடாகிறது.?

விடையை ஒரு முன்பாதி திருக்குறள், அழகாகச் சொல்கிறது ''நிலத்திற்கிடந்தமை கால் காட்டும்''

மண் எப்படியிருக்கிறதோ அப்படியே அதன் பயிர்களும் இருக்கும் உண்மைதானே? தாவரங்கள் என்பதுதான் என்ன? காற்று மண்டலத்தை நோக்கி மண்ணின் நீட்சி தானே? தன்னிலிருந்து திரட்டிப் பொறுக்கிய சக்திகளைத் தானே பூமியானது மரமென்றும், செடியென்றும் வெளியே தள்ளியிருக்கிறது. நல் சுகந்தங்களை இழுத்து முகர்ந்து அதுவிட்ட மூச்சுதானே ரோஜா, மல்லிகை, மனோரஞ்சிதம், அது எறிந்த பந்து தானே? சிங்கமும் வேங்கையும், பறவைகள் எங்கிருந்துதான் வந்தன? மனிதன், தாவரமாகட்டும், மிருகங்களாகட்டும். அனைத்து ஜீவராசி உடல்களிலும் மண்ணில் இல்லாத வேறுஒரு உலோகம் இருக்கிறதா? மண்ணை அன்னை - பூமி என்று சொல்வது மனநிலை சார்ந்த ஒரு நெகிழ்வுச் சொல் மட்டுமா, அது ஒரு விஞ்ஞான உண்மையுமல்லவா?

இதே விதி இந்த அன்னையின் மைந்தர்களான மனிதர்களுக்கு ஏற்பட்ட சமுதாய வாழ்க்கைக்கும் அப்படியே பொருந்தி வந்திருக்கிறது. ஒரு வாழ்க்கைத் தளம் உற்பத்தி செய்யும் பொருட்கள், அந்த வாழ்க்கையையே உற்பத்தி செய்த மூலங்களைத் தவிர வேறெதையும் கொண்டிருப்பதில்லை, கொண்டிருக்க முடியாது. இந்த வாழ்க்கைத் தளம் உற்பத்தி செய்யும் கலை, இலக்கியத்திற்கும் இதுவே விதி ஏனென்றால் கலை இலக்கியமும் ஒரு சமுதாயத்தின் உற்பத்திப் பொருளே, உப பொருள் By Product.

இலக்கியத்தை மண்ணின் படைப்பு என்பதும், அந்தந்தக் கால கட்டத்தின் கண்ணாடி என்பதும் அந்த வாழ்க்கை பற்றிய விமர்சனம் என்பதும் வேறென்ன காரணத்தால்?

ஒரு சமுதாயம் எவ்வளவு ஒருமையோடும் அமைதியோடும் இருக்கிறதோ அவ்வளவு ஒருமையோடும் அமைதியோடும் அக்கால இலக்கியப் படைப்புகள் இருக்கும். சமூகம் எத்தனை வகையில் முரண்பட்டு எவவளவு உக்கிரமாக தனக்குள்ளேயே மோதிக் கொண்டிருக்கிறதோ அதே அளவு முரண்பாடும் மோதலும் இலக்கியத்தில் இருக்கும்.

இன்று முரண்பாடுகள் கூர்மைபட்டிருக்கிற நேரம்.

மோதல்கள் குருட்சேத்திரத்திற்கு ஆள் தேடிக்கொண்டிருக்கும் காலம்.

இந்த ஆள் தேடல் இலக்கியத்தின் மூலமும் நடக்கிறது. எனவே படைப்புகளும் வித்தியாசப்பட்டு பிறக்கின்றன.

அந்த குருட்சேத்திரத்திலாவது இரண்டே அணிகள் நின்றன.

இங்கே ஏகப்பட்ட அணிகள். உண்மையில் யாருடைய எதிரி யாரென்று பல நேரம் தெரியாமலே கூட.

இங்கே இப்படி இருக்கிற சில முக்கியமான அணிகளைப் பார்த்து விட்டோமானால் இன்றைய தமிழ்ச் சிறுகதை போகிற போக்கும் அதன் காரணிகளும் சுலபமாக பிடிபட ஆரம்பித்துவிடும்.

இந்தப்பிரிவுகள்:

1. எந்தச் சமுதாய அமைப்பிலும் அந்த அமைப்பின் லாபத்தை அனுபவித்துக் கொண்டிருப்பவர்கள். அந்த அமைப்பு சிதறிப்போய் விடாமலிருக்க பெரும்கவனம் செலுத்துபவர்கள்.

2. இந்த அமைப்பின்மேல் அதிருப்தி கொண்டு சென்ற கால சமுதாயம் ஏதாவது ஒன்றிற்கு திரும்பிவிட நினைப்பவர்கள். இவர்களுக் குள்ளேயே இரண்டு பிரிவுகள் உண்டு. ஒரு பிரிவு கடந்துபோன சமுதாயம் பொதுவான சமூக நலன்களை கொண்டது என்று மனதார நினைப்பவர்கள். இரண்டாவது பிரிவினர், அங்கே பழையமாதிரியே தங்களுக்கொரு சமூக மேலாதிக்கம் இருக்குமென்று நினைப்பவர்கள். அதாவது இன்றைய அமைப்பின் சுரண்டுகிற பாத்திரம், தங்களுக்கு அங்கே கிடைக்குமென்று நம்புகிறவர்கள்.

3. இந்த சமுதாயத்தின் மேல் அதிருப்தி கொள்வது மட்டுமல்லாது தங்கள் சரித்திர ஞானத்தால் சென்ற கால சமுதாயங்களின் மேலும் நம்பிக்கையிழந்து புதிய தொரு சமுதாயத்தைப் படைத்துக் கொள்ள விருபுகிறவர்கள்.

4. இதில் ஒரு காலும் அதில் ஒரு காலுமாக இருப்பவர்கள்.

5. ''ராமன் ஆண்டாலென்ன? ராவணன் ஆண்டாலென்ன'' பேர்வழிகள், மதில்மேல் பூனைகள் இவர்களை நம்பி யாரும் கெடலாம்.

இனி இவர்களை இவர்களது சிறுகதைகள் மூலம் காண்போம்.

முதல் வகையினரில் அடிப்படை குணாம்சம் என்ன? சமூகத்தில் எத்தனை துறைகள் உண்டோ அத்தனையையும் குத்தகைக்கு எடுத்துக் கொள்வது இன்றைய அரை நிலப்பிரத்துவ அரை முதலாளித்துவ அமைப்பில் நிலம், ஆலைகள், கட்டிடங்கள், தொழில் நிறுவனங்கள், ஹோட்டல்கள், சினிமாக்கள் பத்திரிகைகள் என்று பெரும் முதலீடு எதெதற்கு தேவைப்படுகிறதோ அவை அவைத்தும் இவர்கள் கையில். அரசும்கூட நேரடியாகவோ, மறைமுகமாகவோ, இவர்கள் கையில்தான் இருப்பதாக சொல்லப்படுவதுண்டு.

'நிலத்திற் கிடந்தமை கால் காட்டும்-

அறிந்தே தன் தலையில் மண்ணை வாரிப் போட்டுக்கொள்வார்கள். இந்தக் கதைகள் இவர்களது சொர்க்கமான இந்த சமூக பொருளாதார கலாச்சார அமைப்பை நியாயப்படுத்தும் இதன்மேல் வாசகனின் சிந்தனை திரும்பாமல் பார்த்துக்கொள்ளும். வெறும் பொழுதுபோக்கு தானே என்று சமாதானம் சொல்லி மூளைச் செலவை செய்யும். ணத்திற்கு ஒரு சின்ன கதையை பார்ப்போம்.

இப்போது இரண்டாவது பிரிவைப் பார்ப்போம், இவர்களை இன்றைய நடைமுறையின்மேல் அதிருப்தியுற்று முந்தைய சமுதாயமான நிலமான்ய சமுதாயத்திற்கு திரும்பிப்போக விரும்புகிறவர்கள் என்று சொன்னேன். இவர்களது கோஷம் இந்திய தத்துவ மரபு, இந்துமத மகோன்னதம். நிலமான்ய சமுதாய அமைப்பு மட்டுமென்ன, முதலாளித்துவ அமைப்புக்கு சளைத்ததா? எல்லாம் இதுக்கு அது நீளம். புலிப்பில் அப்பன் என்ற கதைதானே, இந்த அமைப்பிலாவது தனிமனிதன், சுதந்திரம், வாழ்க்கை என்ற சிந்தனை முனகல்கள் உண்டு. அங்கே அதுவும் கிடையாதே. எல்லாம் அவன் செயல். எல்லாம் அவன் கேட்பான். அவன் பார்த்துக்கொள்வான். சதா அவனை நோக்கி மண்டியிட்டுக்கிட. கடமையைச் செய், உரிமையை எதிர் பார்க்காதே என்பது தானே. ஆகவே இதற்கு கச்சை கட்டுகிற எழுத்தாளர்கள் ஒருநிலை எடுத்திருக்கிறார்கள். அவர்கள் சொல்கிறார்கள். 'எல்லாம் சொல்லப்பட்டு விட்டது'. (Everything is told) அதாவது புதிய சிந்தனைக்கு தேவையே இல்லை. எல்லாம் வேதம் ஸ்மிருதிகளில் சொல்லப்பட்டு விட்டது. ஒரு thought proof compartment இன்றைய மனிதன் புதிதாக சிந்திக்க ஆரம்பித்தால் இன்றைய முதலாளித்துவ அமைப்பை மட்டுமல்ல நிலமான்ய அமைப்பின் அகோரங்களையும் கண்டு இவை இரண்டும் இல்லாத வேறு ஒன்றைத் தேட ஆரம்பித்து விடலாமே. எனவே இதற்குத் தகுந்தவாறு தங்கள் இலக்கியக் கொள்கை எப்படியிருக்க வேண்டும்? 'கா. நா. சு. தலைமையில் இது பிரகடனமாகியது.

இலக்கியமென்பதே வடிவம் சார்ந்த ஒன்றுதான். விசயம் (உள்ளடக்கம்) குறித்து ஏற்கனவே எல்லாம் பேசப்பட்டு விட்டதால் இலக்கியவாதி ஏற்கனவே சொல்லப்பட்ட விசயங்களை புதிதுபுதிதாக விதவிதமான வடிவங்களில் சொன்னால் போதும். வடிவ சோதனைகளில் ஈடுபட்டால் போதும்.''

போதுமல்லவா, எவனும் புதிதாக சிந்திக்க ஆரம்பித்தால் தானே ஆபத்து. புதிதாக சிந்திக்காதவரை இறைமைக்கும் கோயிலுக்கும்

வர்ணாச்சிரமத்திற்கும், அதன்மூலம் நில மான்யத்திற்கும், தங்கள் சமூக மேலாதிக்கத்திற்கும் ஆபத்து இல்லையே.

இந்த அணியின் தானைத்தளபதி லா. ச. ராமாமிர்தம் இவரது படைப்புகளில் இவர் ஒன்றைச் சொல்வதற்காக எடுத்துக்கொண்ட சிரமத்தை விட அதைப் புரிய விடாமல் அடிக்க எடுத்துக் கொண்ட சிரமமே அதிகமென்று தோன்றும். 'மனவெளித் தோற்ற' மென்பது இவரது கையிலுள்ள பெரிய பட்டாக்கத்தி. இந்த பட்டாக்கத்தியை வைத்தே இவர் இந்த நாற்பது வருசங்களாக (வெகு சமீபகாலம் நீங்கலாக) வாசகனை விரட்டி வந்திருக்கிறார். இவரது பிரசித்தி பெற்ற 'ஜனனி' சிறுகதையையே எடுத்துக் கொள்வோம். 'அணுவுக்கு' அணுவான பரமாணுவில் பாதியாய் உருக்கொண்டு பராசக்தியானவள் ஜன்மம் எடுக்க வேண்டும் என்ற ஆசை தூண்டப் பெற்றவளாய், ஆகாய வீதியில் நீந்திக் கொண்டிருந்தாள்.

பராசக்தி குழந்தையாய் பிறந்து, அற்புதங்கள் நிகழ்த்தி மணமாகி, மோகத்தில் அணைத்த கணவனை தூக்கி வீசி அடித்து கொன்று கோர்டுக்குப்போய் தண்டனை பெற்று விடுதலையாகி நீண்ட நாள் பிச்சைக்காரி கோலத்தில் பைத்தியமாய் திரிந்து ஒருநாள் மூக்கிலும் வாயிலும் ஈ எறும்பு தாராளமாய் புகுந்து புறப்பட செத்துப் போகும் இந்தக் கதையில் லா.ச.ரா. சொல்ல விரும்புவதென்ன. அப்படியெல்லாம் எதையும் சுலபத்தில் புரிந்து கொள்ள அவர் விடமாட்டார். அவர் பாட்டிற்கு இரண்டுபக்கம் சொல்லிக்கொண்டே போவார். ஒர் இடத்தில் அவர் சொல்கிறார்.

'ஜனனி' நீ இதை அறி. இப்பொழுது நீ - என்னிலிருந்து பிரிந்த நீ-மறுபடியும் 'நா' னாகிக் கொண்டிருக்கிறாய். அதனால்தான் நான் மறுபடியும் உன்னில் உருவாக முடிகிறது. எங்கும் பரவி நிலையற்று உருவற்றது. உருவற்ற நிலையிலிருந்தே உருவாய்ப் பிரிய முடியும், அவ்வுருவற்ற நிலையின் சாயையே. அவவுருக்கள் தாங்கி இருப்பினும், அவை அவ்வுருவற்ற நிலையின் பிளவுகள் தான். ஏனெனில் முழுமையின் துண்டங்கள் அவை. அப்பொழுது துன்டங்களின் துண்டங்கள் முழுமையின் எவ்வளவு பின்னம். ஆனால் ஜனனி ஜனனம் எவ்வளவு பின்னம். ஆயிரம் துண்டங்கள் இன்னும் துண்டமாகி பொடியாகி அப்பொடி இன்னும் பொடித்து மறுபடியும் உருவற்ற நிலையில்தான் கலந்து விடுகின்றன. ஆகையால் ஜனனி நீ என்னில் மூழ்கினால் நீயே நானாகி விடுவாய். இதுதான் 'உன்னின் மீட்சி'. இதுதான் உன்னின் மீட்சி....மீட்சி

வாழ்க்கையின் அபத்தங்களும் போலித் தன்மைகளும் குடும்ப உறவுச் சிக்கல்களும் நன்ருகவே பேசப்படுகின்றன.

அது ஒரு காலத்தின் அவசியம் என்று திரும்பத் திரும்ப தன்னை நியாயப்படுத்திக் கொள்கிற சிந்தனையின் நடுவிலேயே எடுக்கப்படுகிறது

ஒவ்வொரு படைப்பின் பின்னலும் கலாப்பூர்வம் என்ற திரையை தூக்கி விட்டால் அங்கே ஆசிரியன் உட்கார்ந்து கொண்டிருப்பதைக் காணலாம். இது கா.நா.சு.வே. சொன்னதுதான் என்று நினைக்கிறேன் இப்போது கலைத்திரையை உயர்த்திவிட்டு அவரையே பாருங்கள்.

இது மூன்ருவது அணி :

இவர்களில் மிகப் பெரும்பாலோர் இளைஞர்கள். இன்றைய அமைப்பின்மேல் கடும் கோபம் கொண்டவர்கள். அதைத் தங்கள் படைப்புகளில் வெளியீடு செய்ய விரும்புகிறவர்கள். பெரும் பகுதியினர் மார்க்ஸிய சித்தாந்தத்தை ஏற்றுக் கொண்டிருப்பவர்கள் அல்லது அனுதாபிகள் நான் முன்னே சொன்னது போல மிகப் புதியதொரு சமுதாயத்தை கட்டமைக்க வேண்டுமென விரும்புகிறவர்கள். இதுவரை மனித இனம் பல சமுதாய கட்டங்களை கட்டமைத்து முன்னேறி முன்னேறி வந்திருக்கிறதென்றும், அது பின்னும் மேம்பட்டு பினனும் மேன்மையானதொரு சமுதாயமாகத்தான் பரிணமிக்க வேண்டுமே தவிர எங்காவது திருப்பிச்செல்ல வேண்டுமென நினைப்பது. சரித்திர ஞானமில்லா அறியாமையென்று இவர்கள் கருதுகிருர்கள். ஆகவே சமூகத்தை அடுத்த கட்டத்திற்கு உந்துவதற்கான சக்தியாக தங்கள் இலக்கியப் படைப்புகளைச் செய்ய முனைகிருர்கள்.

உயிரும் சதையுமான நிஜமான பாத்திரங்களைக் கொண்டு நிதர்-ஸனமான சாட்சிய பூர்வமான படைப்புகளை வெளியிட்ட பொன்னீலன் கடைசியில் தன் திறமை அனைத்தையும் கூட்டி 'கரிசல்' என்றும் கற்பனை லோகத்தில் (UTOPIA) வந்து நின்ருர். அப்புறம் கரிந்து சரிந்து 'புதிய மொட்டு' ஆனுர். தலைகீழ்.

இலக்கியத்தில் பிரச்சாரம் பாவமல்ல, வீண் வேலையுமல்ல. அது தேவையும் கூட. இதுவரை வந்திருக்கும் எந்த இலக்கியத்தை எடுத்துப் பார்த்தாலும் அதற்கொரு பிரச்சார நோக்கம் இருந்தே இருக்கிறது. ஆனல் அது எவ்விதம் கலையோடு மோதாமல் முறைக்காமல் துறுத்திக் கொணடு இலக்கிய அமைதியை அழிக்காமல் இருக்கிறது என்பது தான்

பிரச்னை. இந்தப் பிரக்ஞையோடு இயங்குகிற இளைஞர்கள் இல்லாமல் இல்லை. இவர்களே இன்றைய நம்பிக்கையாகவும் இருக்கிறார்கள். ஆனால் ஒரு வேடிக்கை இவர்கள் எல்லோருமே (அஷ்வக் கோஷ் தவிர) கட்சிகள் சார்ந்த இலக்கியக் குழுக்களோடு சம்பந்தமில்லாதவர்கள். அதிகமாகப் போனால் இவர்களில் சிலர் ஆரம்ப காலத்தில் அங்கிருந்து விட்டு பிறகு விரைவில் வெளியேறியவர்களாக இருப்பார்கள்.

நான்காவது அணி ஆற்றில் ஒரு கால், சேற்றில் ஒரு கால் அணி என்று சொன்னேன், இதற்கு நல்ல உதாரணம் ஜெயகாந்தன். ஒரு நேரத்தில் சமூகம் மற்றும் தனி மனிதர்களைப்பற்றி சிந்தனை உக்கிரத்தோடு இவர் சாதித்தவை நிறை என்றாலும் (இவைகளில் பல பொய்-நிதர்ஸன வடிவமானவை) தற்போது வர்ணாச்சிரம தர்மத்தையும் மார்க்ஸீயத்தையும் இணைத்து hot-ice செய்து விடுவதாக சபதமெடுத் திருக்கிறார். இவரோடு நெருங்கிப் பழகும் தோழர் ஒருவர் சொனனார், 'அவரு நம்மள எல்லாம் shape பண்ணிட்டாரு இல்ல. இனிமே மதத்-துக்குள்ள பூந்து அங்க இருக்கவங்கள இழுத்துக்கிட்டு வரத்தான் இந்த வேல, என்று. அவர் அங்கிருந்து இழுத்து வரப் போகிறாரா என்பதைக் காலம் தான் சொல்ல வேண்டும்.

ஐந்தாவது அணியை ராமன் ஆண்டாலென்ன? ராவணன் ஆண்டாலென்ன என்ற கட்சியாகச் சொன்னேன். இவர்களது மன நிலைக்கு நல்ல உதாரணம் கொடுப்பதென்றால் கன்னட எழுத்தாளர் ஆனந்தமூர்த்தி தன்னைப் பற்றி சொன்னதைச் சொல்லலாம். 'நான் பல இடங்களில் இருந்திருக்கிறேன். ஆனால் என்றும் மார்க்ஸிஸ்டாக இருந்ததில்லை. ஆனால் நான் மார்கிஸீஸத்தை எதிர்க்கிறவனும் இல்லை.

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